

IN THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 - 32 (cancelled)

Claim 33 (previously presented): An access control method for use with a broadcast communication network, the method comprising:

receiving an encoded program at a subscriber unit via the broadcast communication network;

preventing decoding of the encoded program at the subscriber unit for at least one preselected time period, preselected in accordance with a preference of a user of the subscriber unit,

wherein the step of preventing decoding comprises:

disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to a selection inputted by the user;

generating a disabling code in response to said selection inputted by the user; and

employing said disabling code to prevent decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period, and

the disabling code is associated with a payment code determining a payment rate.

Claim 34 (previously presented): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to disabling data inputted at a headend of the broadcast communication network.

Claim 35 (previously presented): A method according to claim 34 and wherein said disabling data comprises addressed restriction information which is individually addressed to the subscriber unit.

Claim 36 (previously presented): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to disabling data resident in a removable security element which is operatively associated with said subscriber unit.

Claim 37 (previously presented): A method according to claim 36 and wherein said disabling data resident in the removable security element is stored in the removable security element before the removable security element is provided to the user for use thereby.

Claim 38 (previously presented): A method according to claim 34 and wherein said disabling data comprises at least a portion of characteristics of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 39 (previously presented): A method according to claim 36 and wherein said disabling data comprises characteristics of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 40 (previously presented): A method according to claim 38 and wherein said characteristics of the at least one preselected time period comprise at least one of the following:

- a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and an ending time of the at least one preselected time period; and

- a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and a length of the at least one preselected time period.

Claim 41 (previously presented): A method according to claim 39 and wherein said characteristics of the at least one preselected time period comprises at least one of the following:

- a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and an ending time of the at least one preselected time period;

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period and a length of the at least one preselected time period; and

a beginning time of the at least one preselected time period, beginning after the removable security element is inserted in a removable security element receptacle in said subscriber unit for a specified time period, and a time remaining to an end of a current day.

Claim 42 (previously presented): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of a program in a clear form at a channel to which the subscriber unit is tuned during said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 43 (previously presented): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the step of disabling display of a pay program in a clear form at a channel to which the subscriber unit is tuned during said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 44 (previously presented): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said program comprises at least one of the following: a television program; a pay television program; a commercial; a video clip; a program guide; an electronic program guide (EPG); data; multimedia information; a hypermedia link; a computer program; computer data; an application which may be downloaded; a program applet; teletext information; an audio program; a textual information program; an image generating program; electronic-mail; and voice mail.

Claim 45 (previously presented): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said at least one preselected time period comprises at least one of the following: a periodic time period; and a specific time period.

Claim 46 (previously presented): A method according to claim 34 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the steps of:

transmitting the program associated with an individually addressed disabling code from the headend;

receiving the program with the associated individually addressed disabling code at the subscriber unit;

separating the individually addressed disabling code from the program to produce a separated individually addressed disabling code;

processing the separated individually addressed disabling code to determine whether the individually addressed disabling code is addressed to the subscriber unit; and

preventing decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period if said individually addressed disabling code is addressed to the subscriber unit.

Claim 47 (previously presented): A method according to claim 46 and wherein said disabling code is associated with a payment code determining a payment rate.

Claim 48 (previously presented): A method according to claim 36 and wherein said step of preventing decoding comprises the steps of:

generating a disabling code in response to said disabling data resident in the removable security element; and

employing said disabling code to prevent decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period.

Claim 49 (previously presented): A method according to claim 46 and wherein said disabling code is comprised in one of the following: an Entitlement Control Message (ECM); and an Entitlement Management Message (EMM).

Claim 50 (previously presented): A method according to claim 33 and wherein said at least one preselected time period is selected to immediately follow an additional time period during which programs broadcast via the broadcast communication network are displayed in a clear form.

Claim 51 (previously presented): Access control apparatus for use with a broadcast communication network, the apparatus comprising:

a receiver receiving an encoded program at a subscriber unit via the broadcast communication network;

a processor operatively associated with the receiver and operative to prevent decoding of the encoded program at the subscriber unit for at least one preselected time period, preselected in accordance with a preference of a user of the subscriber unit, the processor being operative to prevent decoding by:

disabling display of the program in a clear form at the subscriber unit for said at least one preselected time period in response to a selection inputted by the user;

generating a disabling code in response to said selection inputted by the user; and

employing said disabling code to prevent decoding of said program for said at least one preselected time period,

wherein the disabling code is associated with a payment code determining a payment rate.